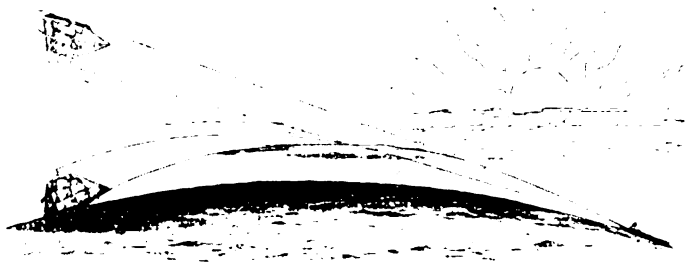


the observer to be water, and the image changes its place as you go forward just as a reflection would move as you advanced on a glass mirror.



A DIAGRAM SHOWING THE REAL COURSE OF THE RAYS OF LIGHT (CURVED LINES), AND THEIR APPARENT COURSE (STRAIGHT LINES).

In the case of the ship, the air-mirror seems to be above you, and reflects the ship which is really out of sight over the horizon. But I do not pretend to explain all about the different images that may possibly be formed under different conditions of the atmosphere—that is a school-room task, and a hard one.

The “fata Morgana” is a form or modification of mirage often seen in the straits that separate the toe of the “boot” of Italy and the island of Sicily, just opposite. When the sun is just at the right position, and sea and air are also ready to help, strange views of objects upon the opposite coast are seen from Calabria—sometimes magnified, and set against a background of colored mists. “Fata Morgana” means the Fairy of the Sea.

It is said that sometimes, during a hot and still summer day, by placing the eye close to the surface of a dry road, a mirage can be seen; but I have never tried it.

Before these and other strange sights were understood and explained, we need not wonder that sailors and travelers held many strange beliefs in regard to them.

MASTER SKYLARK.

BY JOHN BENNETT.

[*Begun in the November number.*]

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADMIRAL'S COMPANY.



THE ancient city of Coventry stands upon a little hill, with old St. Michael's steeple and the spire of Holy Trinity church rising above it against the sky; and, as the master-player and the boy came climbing upward from the south, walls, towers, chimneys, and red-tiled roofs were turned to gold by the glow of the setting sun.

To Nick it seemed as if a halo overhung the town—a ruddy glory and a wonder bright; for here the Grey Friars of the great monastery had played their holy mysteries and miracle-plays for over a hundred years; here the trade-guilds had held their pageants when the friars' day was done; here were all the wonders that old men told by winter fires.

People were coming and going through the gates like bees about a hive; and in the distance Nick could hear the sound of many voices, the rush of feet, wheels, and hoofs, and the shrill pipe of music. Here and there were little knots of country folk making holiday—a father and mother with a group of rosy children; a lad and his lass, spruce in new finery, and gay with bits of ribbon,—merry groups that were

ever changing. Gay banners flapped on tall ash staves. The suburb fields were filled with booths and tents and stalls and butts for archery. The very air seemed eager with the eve of holiday.

But what to Nick was breathless wonder was to Carew only a twice-told tale; so he pushed through the crowded thoroughfares, amid a throng that made Nick's head spin round, and came quickly to the Blue Boar Inn.

The court was crowded to the gates with horses, travelers, and serving-men; and here and there and every-

where rushed the busy innkeeper, with a linen napkin fluttering on his arm, his cap half off, and in his hot hand a pewter flagon, from which the brown ale dripped in spatters on his fat legs as he flew.

"They 're here," said Carew, looking shrewdly about; "for there is Gregory Goole, my groom, and Stephen Magelt, the tire-man. In with thee, Nicholas."

He put Nick before him with a little air of patronage, and pushed him into the room.

It was a large, low chamber, with heavy beams overhead, hung with leather jacks and pewter tankards. Around the walls stood rough tables, at which a medley



"THE COURT OF THE BLUE BOAR INN WAS CROWDED TO THE GATES."

of guests sat eating, drinking, dicing, playing at cards, and talking loudly all at once, while the tapster and the cook's knave sped wildly about.

At a great table in the midst of the riot sat the Lord High Admiral's players—a score or

which Nick had never seen before. But all the diners looked up when Carew's face was recognized, and welcomed him with a deafening shout.

He waved his hand for silence.

"Thanks for these kind plaudits, gentle



"'MASTER NICHOLAS SKYLARK, THE SWEETEST SINGER IN ALL THE KINGDOM OF ENGLAND!'"

more loud-swashing gallants, richly clad in ruffs and bands, embroidered shirts, Italian doublets slashed and laced, Venetian hose, gay velvet caps with jeweled bands, and every man a poniard or a rapier at his hip. Nick felt very much like a little brown sparrow in a flock of gaudy Indian birds.

The board was loaded down with meat and drink; and some of the players were eating with forks, a new trick from the London court,

friends," said he, with a mocking air; "I have returned."

"Yes; we see that ye have, Gaston," they all shouted, and laughed again.

"Ay," said he, thrusting his hand into his pouch, "ye fled, and left me to be spoiled by the spoiler, but ye see I have left the spoiler spoiled."

Lifting his hand triumphantly, he shook in their faces the golden chain that the burgesses

of Stratford had given him, and then, laying his hand upon Nick's shoulder, bowed to them all, and to him with courtly grace, and said: "Be known, be known all! Gentlemen, my Lord Admiral's Players, Master Nicholas Skylark, the sweetest singer in all the kingdom of England!"

Nick's cheeks flushed hotly, and his eyes fell; for they all stared curiously, first at him, and then at Carew standing up behind him, and several grinned mockingly, and winked in a knowing way. He stole a look at Carew; but the master-player's face was frank and quite unmoved, so that Nick felt reassured.

"Why, sirs," said Carew, as some began to laugh and to speak to one another covertly, "it is no jest. He hath a sweeter voice than Cyril Davy's, the best woman's-voice in all London town. Upon my word, it is the sweetest voice a body ever heard—outside of heaven and the holy angels!"—he lowered his tone, and bowed his head a little—"I'll stake mine honour on it!"

"Hast any, Gaston?" called a jeering voice, whereat the whole room roared.

But Carew cried again in a high voice that would be heard above the noise: "Now, hark 'e; what I say is so. It is, upon my word, and on the remnant of mine honour! And to-morrow ye shall see; for Master Skylark is to sing and play with us."

When he had said that, nothing would do but Nick must sit down and eat with them; so they made a place for him and for Master Carew.

Nick bent his head and said a grace, at which some of them laughed, until Carew shook his head with a stern frown; and before he ate he bowed politely to them all, as his mother had taught him to do. They all bowed mockingly, and hilariously offered him wine, which, when he refused, they pressed upon him, until Carew stopped them, saying that he would have no more of that. As he spoke he clapped his hand upon his poniard, and scowled blackly. They all laughed, but offered Nick no more wine; instead, they picked him choice morsels, and made a great deal of him, until his silly young head was quite turned, and he sat up and gave himself a few airs—not many, for

Stratford was no great place in which to pick up airs.

When they had eaten they wanted Nick to sing; but again Carew interposed. "Nay," said he; "he hath just eaten his fill, so he cannot sing. Moreover, he is no jackdaw to screech in such a cage as this. He shall not sing until to-morrow, in the play."

At this some of the leading players who held shares in the venture demurred, doubting if Nick could sing at all; but—"Hark 'e," said Master Carew shortly, clapping his hand upon his poniard, "I say that he can. Do ye take me?"

So they said no more; and shortly after he took Nick away, and left them over their tan-kards, singing uproariously.

The Blue Boar Inn had not a bed to spare, nor had the players kept a place for Carew; at which he smiled grimly, said he'd not forget it, and took lodgings for himself and Nick at the Three Tuns in the next street.

Nick spoke indeed of his mother's cousin, with whom he had meant to stay, but the master-player protested warmly; so, little loath, and much flattered by the attentions of so great a man, Nick gave over the idea and said no more about it.

When the chamberlain had shown them to their room and they were both undressed, Nick knelt beside the bed and said a prayer, as he always did at home. Carew watched him curiously. It was quiet there, and the light dim; Nick was young, and his yellow hair was very curly. Carew could hear the faint breath murmuring through the boy's lips as he prayed, and while he stared at the little white figure his mouth twitched in a queer way. But he tossed his head, and muttered to himself, "What, Gaston Carew, turning soft? Nay, nay. I'll do it, on my soul I will!" rolled into bed and was soon fast asleep.

As for Nick, what with the excitement of the day, the dazzling fancies in his brain, his tired legs, the weird night noises in the town, and strange, tremendous dreams, he scarce could get to sleep at all; but toward morning he fell into a refreshing doze, and did not wake until the town was loud with May.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAY-DAY PLAY.

It was soon afternoon. All Coventry was thronged with people keeping holiday, and at the Blue Boar a scene of wild confusion reigned.

Tap-room and hall were crowded with guests; and in the cobbled court horses innumerable stamped and whinnied. The players, with knitted brows, stalked about the quieter nooks, going over their several parts, and looking to their costumes, which were for the most part upon their backs; while the thumping and pounding of the carpenters at work upon the stage in the inn-yard was enough to drive a quiet-loving person wild.

Nick scarcely knew whether he were on his head or on his heels. The master-player would not let him eat at all, after once breaking his fast, for fear it might affect his voice, and had him say his lines a hundred times until he had them pat. Then he was off, directing here, there, and everywhere, until the court was cleared of all that had no business there, and the last surreptitious small boy had been duly projected from the gates by Peter Hostler's hobnailed boot.

"Now, Nick," said Carew, coming up all in a gale, and throwing a sky-blue silken cloak about Nick's shoulders, "thou 'lt enter here"; and he led him to a hallway door just opposite the gates. "When Master Whitelaw, as the Duke, calls out, 'How now, who comes?—I 'll match him for the ale!' be quickly in and answer to thy part; and, marry, boy, don't miss thy cues, or—tsst, thy head 's not worth a peascod!" With that he clapped his hand upon his poniard and glared into Nick's eyes, as if to look clear through to the back of the boy's wits. Nick heard his white teeth grind, and was all at once very much afraid of him, for he did indeed look dreadful.

So Nicholas Attwood stood by the entry door, with his heart in his throat, waiting his turn.

He could hear the pages in the courtyard outside shouting for stools for their masters, and squabbling over the best places upon the stage. Then the gates creaked and there came

a wild rush of feet and a great crying out as the 'prentices and burghers trooped into the inn-yard, pushing and crowding for places near the stage. Those who had the money bawled aloud for farthing stools. The rest stood jostling in a wrangling crowd upon the ground, while up and down a girl's shrill voice went all the time, crying high, "Cherry ripe, cherry ripe! Who 'll buy my sweet May cherries?"

Then there was another shout and a rattling tread of feet along the wooden balconies that ran around the walls of the inn-yard, and cries from the apprentices below: "Good-day, fair Master Harrington! Good-day, Sir Thomas Parkes! Good-day, sweet Mistress Nettleby and Master Nettleby! Good-day, good-day, good-day!" for the richer folk were coming in at twopence each, and all the galleries were full. And then he heard the baker's boy with sugared cakes and ginger-nuts go stamping up the stairs.

The musicians in the balcony overhead were tuning up. There was a flute, a viol, a gittern, a fiddle, and a drum; and behind the curtain, just outside the door, Nick could hear the master-player's low voice giving hasty orders to the others.

So he said his lines all over to himself, and cleared his throat. Then on a sudden a shutter opened high above the orchestra, a trumpet blared, the kettledrum crashed, and he heard a loud voice shout:

"Good citizens of Coventry, and high-born gentles all: know ye now that we, the players of the company of His Grace, Charles, Lord Howard, High Admiral of England, Ireland, Wales, Calais, and Boulogne, the marches of Normandy, Gascony, and Aquitaine, Captain-General of the Navy and the Seas of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen—"

At that the crowd in the courtyard cheered and cheered again.

"—will, with your kind permission, play forthwith the laughable comedy of 'The Three Grey Gowns,' by Master Thomas Heywood, in which will be spoken many good things, old and new, and a brand-new song will be sung. Now, hearken all—the play begins!"

The trumpet blared, the kettledrum crashed again, and as a sudden hush fell over the throng

without, Nick heard the voices of the players going on.

It was a broad farce, full of loud jests and nonsense, a great thwacking of sticks and tumbling about; and Nick, with his eye to the crack of the door, listened with all his ears for his cue, far too excited even to think of laughing at the rough jokes, though the crowd in the inn-yard roared till they held their sides.

Carew came hurrying up with an anxious look in his restless eyes.

"Ready, Nicholas!" said he sharply, taking Nick by the arm and lifting the latch. "Go straight down front now, as I told thee — mind thy cues — speak boldly — sing as thou didst sing for me — and if thou wouldst not break mine heart, do not fail me now! I have staked it all upon thee here — and we *must* win!"

"How now, who comes?" Nick heard a loud voice call outside — the door-latch clicked behind him — he was out in the open air and down the stage before he quite knew where he was.

The stage was built against the wall just opposite the gates. It was but a temporary platform of planks laid upon trestles. One side of it was against the wall, and around the three other sides the crowd was packed close to the platform rail.

At the ends, upon the boards, several wealthy gallants sat on high three-legged stools, within arm's reach of the players acting there. The courtyard was a sea of heads, and the balconies were filled with gentlefolk in holiday attire, eating cakes and chaffing gaily at the play. All was one bewildered cloud of staring eyes to Nick, and the only thing which he was sure he saw was the painted sign that hung upon the curtain at the rear, which in the lack of other scenery announced in large red print: "This is a Room in Master Jonah Jackdawe's House."

And then he heard the last quick words, "I'll match him for the ale!" and started on his lines.

It was not that he said so ill what little he had to say, but that his voice was homelike and familiar in its sound, one of their own, with no amazing London accent to the words

— just the speech of every-day, the sort that they all knew.

First, some one in the yard laughed out — a shock-headed ironmonger's apprentice, "Whoy, bullies, there be hayseed in his hair. 'T is took off pasture over-soon. I fecks! they've plucked him green!"

There was a hoarse, exasperating laugh. Nick hesitated in his lines. The player at his back tried to prompt him, but only made the matter worse, and behind the green curtain at the door a hand went "clap" upon a dagger-hilt. The play lagged, and the crowd began to jeer. Nick's heart was full of fear and of angry shame that he had dared to try. Then all at once there came a brief pause, in which he vaguely realized that no one spoke. The man behind him thrust him forward, and whispering wrathfully, "Quick, quick — sing up, thou little fool!" stepped back and left him there alone.

A viol overhead took up the time, the gittern struck a few sharp notes. This unexpected music stopped the noise, and all was still. Nick thought of his mother's voice singing on a summer's evening among the hollyhocks, and as the viol's droning died away he drew a deep breath and began to sing the words of "Heywood's newest song":

Pack, clouds, away, and welcome, day;
With night we banish sorrow;
Sweet air, blow soft; mount, lark, aloft,
To give my love good-morrow!

It was only a part of a madrigal, the air to which they had fitted the words — the same air that Nick had sung in the woods — a thing scarce meant ever to be sung alone, a simple strain, a few plain notes, and at the close one brief, queer, warbling trill like a bird's wild song, that rose and fell and rose again like a silver ripple.

The instruments were still; the fresh young voice came out alone, and it was done so soon that Nick hardly knew that he had sung at all. For a moment no one seemed to breathe. Then there was a very great noise, and all the court seemed hurling at him. A man upon the stage sprang to his feet. What they were going to do to him Nick did not know. He

gave a frightened cry, and ran past the green curtain, through the open door, and into the master-player's excited arms.

"Quick, quick!" cried Carew. "Go back, go back! There, hark!—dost not hear them call? Quick, out again—they call thee back!" With that he thrust Nick through the door. The man upon the stage came up, slipped something into his hand—Nick, all bewildered, knew not what; and there he stood, quite stupefied, not knowing what to do. Then Carew came out hastily and led him down the stage, bowing, and pressing his hand to his heart, and smiling like a summer sunrise; so that Nick, seeing this, did the same, and bowed as neatly as he could; though, to be sure, his was only a simple country-bred bow, and no such ceremonious to-do as Master Carew's courtly London obeisance.

Every one was standing up and shouting so that not a soul could hear his ears, until the iron-monger's apprentice bellowed above the rest; "Whoy, bullies!" he shouted, amid a chorus of cheers and laughter, "did n't I say 't was catched out in the fields—it be a skylark, sure enough! Come, Muster Skylark, sing that song again, an' thou shalt ha' my brand-new cap!"

Then many voices cried out together, "Sing it again! The Skylark—the Skylark!"

Nick looked up, startled. "Why, Master Carew," said he, with a tremble in his voice, "do they mean me?"

Carew put one hand beneath Nick's chin and turned his face up, smiling. The master-player's cheeks were flushed with triumph, and his dark eyes danced with pride: "Ay, Nicholas Skylark; 't is thou they mean."

The viol and the music came again from overhead, and when they ceased Nick sang the little song once more. And when the master-player had taken him outside, and the play was over, some fine ladies came and kissed him, to his great confusion; for no one but his mother or his kin had ever done so before, and these had much perfume about them, musk and rose-attar, so that they smelled like rose-mallows in July. The players of the Lord Admiral's company were going about shaking hands with Carew and with each other as if

they had not met for years, and slapping one another upon the back; and one came over, a tall, solemn, black-haired man, he who had written the song, and stood with his feet apart and stared at Nick, but spoke never a word, which Nick thought was very singular. But as he turned away he said, with a world of pity in his voice, "And I have writ two hundred plays, yet never saw thy like. Lad, lad, thou art a jewel in a wild swine's snout!" which Nick did not understand at all; nor why Master Carew said so sharply, "Come, Heywood, hold thy blabbing tongue; we are all in the same sty."

"Speak for thyself, Gat Carew!" answered Master Heywood firmly. "I'll have no hand in this affair, I tell thee once for all!"

Master Carew flushed queerly and bit his lip, and, turning hastily away, took Nick to walk about the town. Nick then, for the first time, looked into his hand to see what the man upon the stage had given him. It was a gold rose-noble.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE PLAY.

THROUGH the high streets of the third city of the realm Master Gaston Carew strode as if he were a very king, and Coventry his kingdom.

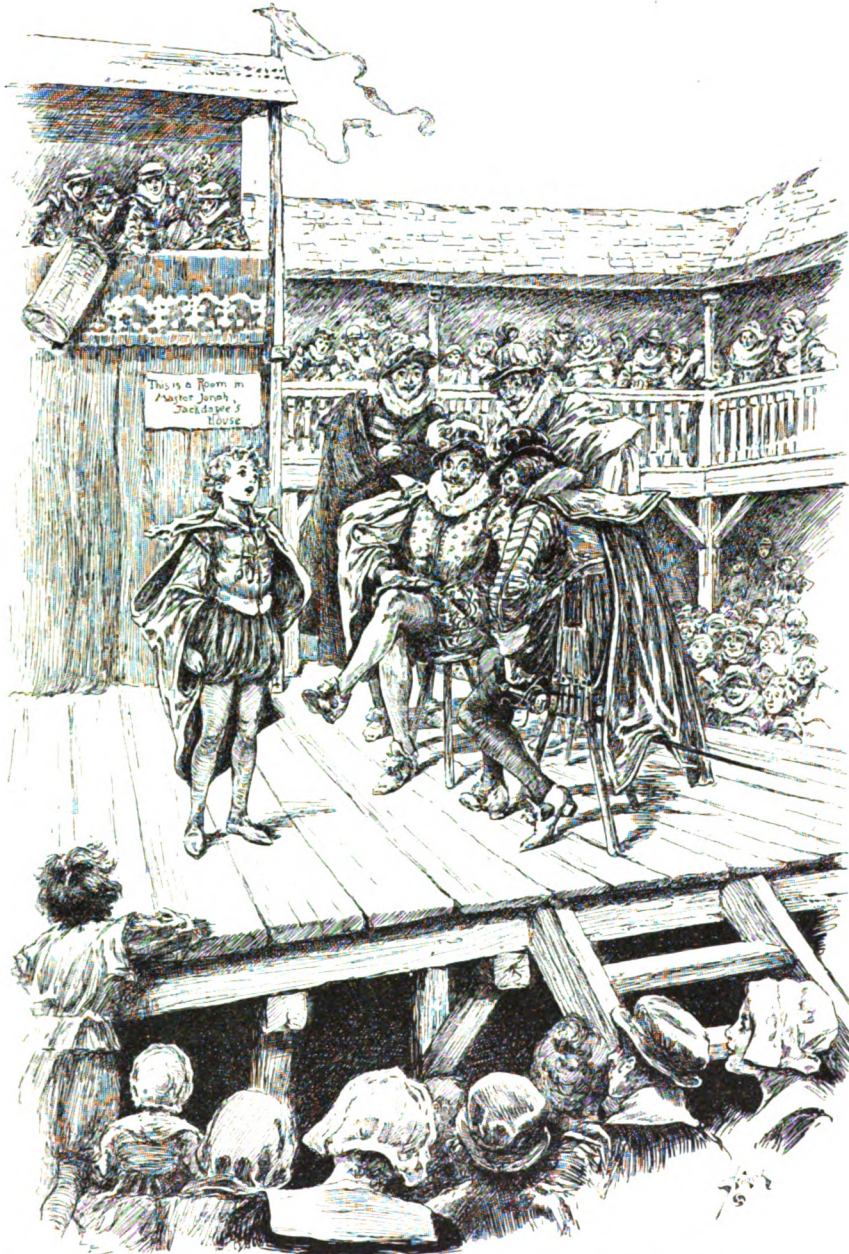
There was music everywhere,—of pipers and fiddlers, drums, tabrets, flutes, and horns,—and there were dancing bears upon the corners, with minstrels, jugglers, chapmen crying their singsong wares, and such a mighty hurly-burly as Nick had never seen before. And wherever there was a wonder to be seen, Carew had Nick see it, though it cost a penny a peep, and lifted him to watch the fencing and quarter-staff play in the market-place. And at one of the gay booths he bought gilt ginger-nuts and caraway cakes with currants on the top, and gave them all to Nick, who thanked him kindly, but said, if Master Carew pleased, he'd rather have his supper, for he was very hungry.

"Why, to be sure," said Carew, and tossed a silver penny for a scramble to the crowd; "thou shalt have the finest supper in the town."

Whereupon, bowing to all the great folk they

met, and being bowed to most politely in return, they came to the Three Tuns.

to think that there was not in all the world another gentleman so grand as Master Gaston



"NICK THOUGHT OF HIS MOTHER'S SINGING ON A SUMMER'S EVENING—DREW A DEEP BREATH AND BEGAN TO SING."

Stared at by a hundred curious eyes, made way for everywhere, and followed by wondering exclamations of envy, it was little wonder that Nick, a simple country lad, at last began

Carew, and also to have a pleasant notion that Nicholas Attwood was no bad fellow himself.

The lordly innkeeper came smirking and

bobbing obsequiously about, with his freshest towel on his arm, and took the master-player's order as a dog would take a bone.

"Here, sirrah," said Carew haughtily; "fetch us some repast, I care not what, so it be wholesome food—a green Banbury cheese, some simnel bread and oat-cakes; a pudding, hark 'e, sweet and full of plums, with honey and a pasty—a meat pasty, marry, a pasty made of fat and toothsome eels; and moreover, fellow, ale to wash it down—none of thy penny ale, mind ye, too weak to run out of the spigot, but snapping good brew—dost take me?—with beef and mustard, tripe, herring, and a good fat capon broiled to a turn!"

The innkeeper gaped like a fish.

"How now, sirrah? Dost think I cannot pay thy score?" quoth Carew sharply.

"Nay, nay," stammered the host; "but, sir, where—where will ye put it all without bursting into bits?"

"Be off with thee!" cried Carew sharply. "That is my affair. Nay, Nick," said he, laughing at the boy's astonished look; "we shall not burst. What we do not have to-night, we 'll have in the morning. 'T is the way with these inns—to feed the early birds with scraps—so the more we leave from supper the more we 'll have for breakfast. And thou wilt need a good breakfast to ride on all day long."

"Ride?" exclaimed Nick. "Why, sir, I was minded to walk back to Stratford, and keep my gold rose-noble whole."

"Walk?" cried the master-player scornfully. "Thou, with thy golden throat? Nay, Nicholas, thou shalt ride to-morrow like a very king, if I have to pay for the horse myself, twelve pence the day!" and with that he began chuckling, as if it were a joke.

But Nick stood up, and bowing, thanked him gratefully; at which the master-player went from chuckling to laughing, and leered at Nick so oddly that the boy would have thought him tipsy, save that there had been nothing yet to drink. And a queer sense of uneasiness came creeping over him as he watched the master-player's eyes opening and shutting, opening and shutting, so that one moment he seemed to be staring and the next almost asleep; though all the while his keen

dark eyes peered out from between the lids like old dog-foxes from their holes, looking Nick over from head to foot, and from foot to head again, as if measuring him with an ell-wand.

When the supper came, filling the whole table and the sideboard too, Nick arose to serve the meat as he was used at home; but, "Nay, Nicholas Skylark, my honey-throat," cried Carew, "sit thee down! Thou wait on me—thou songster of the silver tongue? Nay, nay, sweetheart, the knave shall wait on thee, or I 'll wait on thee myself—I will, upon my word! Why, Nick, I tell thee I love thee, and dost think I 'd let thee wait or walk—nay, nay, thou 'lt ride to-morrow like a king, and have all Stratford wait for thee!" At this he chuckled so that he almost choked upon a mouthful of bread and meat.

"Canst ride, Nicholas?"

"Fairly, sir."

"Fairly? Fie, modesty! I warrant thou canst ride like a very centaur. What sayest—I 'll ride a ten-mile race with thee to-morrow as we go?"

"Why," cried Nick, "are ye going back to Stratford to play, after all?"

"To Stratford? Nay; not for a bushel of good gold Harry shovel-boards! Bah! That town is ratsbane and nightshade in my mouth! Nay, we 'll not go back to Stratford town; but we shall ride a piece with thee, Nicholas,—we shall ride a piece with thee."

Chuckling again to himself, he fell to upon the pasty and said no more.

Nick held his peace, as he was taught to do unless first spoken to; but he could not help thinking that stage-players, and master-players in particular, were very queer folk.

CHAPTER XI.

DISOWNED.

NIGHT came down on Stratford town that last sweet April day, and the pastured kine came lowing home. Supper-time passed, and the cool stars came twinkling out; but still Nick Attwood did not come.

"He hath stayed to sleep with Robin, Mas-



"SOME FINE LADIES CAME AND KISSED HIM, TO HIS GREAT CONFUSION."

ter Burgess Getley's son," said Mistress Attwood, standing in the door, and staring out into the dusk; "he is often lonely here."

"He should ha' telled thee on it, then," said Simon Attwood. "This be no way to do. I've a mind to put him to a trade."

"Nay, Simon," protested his wife; "he may be careless—he is young yet—but Nicholas is a good lad. Let him have his schooling out—he 'll be the better for it."

pleaded Mistress Attwood. "Who knows what hath happened to him? He must be hurt, or he 'd 'a' come home to his mother"—and she began to wring her hands.

"He may ha' fallen from a tree, and lieth all alone out on the hill—or, Simon, the Avon! Thou dost na think our lad be drowned?"

"Fudge!" said Simon Attwood. "Born to hang 'll never drown!"

When, however, the next day crept around and still his son did not come home, a doubt stole into the tanner's own heart. Yet when his wife was for starting out to seek some tidings of the boy, he stopped her wrathfully.

"Nay, Margaret," said he; "thou shalt na go traipsing around the town like a hen wi' but one chick. I wull na ha' thee made a laughing-stock by all the fools in Stratford."

But as the third day rolled around, about the middle of the after-

noon the tanner himself sneaked out at the back door of his tannery in Southam's lane, and went up into the town.

"Robin Getley," he asked at the guild-school door, "was my son wi' thee overnight?"

"Nay, Master Attwood. Has he not come back?"

"Come back? From where?"

Robin hung his head.

"From where?" demanded the tanner. "Come, boy!"

"From Coventry," said Robin, knowing that the truth would out at last, anyway.

"He went to see the players, sir," spoke



"HOW NOW, SIRRAH! DOST THINK I CANNOT PAY THE SCORE?"

"Then let him show it as he goes along," said Attwood, grimly, as he blew the candle out.

But May-day dawned; mid-morning came, mid-afternoon, then supper-time again; and supper-time crept into dusk—and still no Nicholas Attwood.

His mother grew uneasy; but his father only growled: "We 'll reckon up when he cometh home. Master Brunswood tells me he was na at the school the whole day yesterday—and he be feared to show his face. I 'll fear him with a bit of birch!"

"Do na be too hard with the lad, Simon,"

up Hal Saddler briskly, not heeding Robin's stealthy kick. "He said he'd bide wi' Diccon Haggard overnight; an' he said he wished he were a master-player himself, sir, too."

Simon Attwood, frowning blackly, hurried on. It *was* Nick, then, whom he had seen crossing the market-square.

Wat Raven, who swept Clopton bridge, had seen two boys go up the Warwick road. "One were thy Nick, Muster Attwood," said he, thumping the dirt from his broom across the coping-stone; "and the other were Dawson's Hodge."

The angry tanner turned again into the market-place. His brows were knit, and his eyes were hot, yet his step was heavy and slow. Above all things, he hated disobedience, yet in his surly way he loved his only son; and far worse than disobedience, he hated that *his* son should disobey.

Astride a beam in front of Master Thompson's house sat Roger Dawson. Simon Attwood took him by the collar none too gently.

"Here, leave be!" choked Roger, wriggling hard; but the tanner's grip was like iron. "Wert thou in Coventry May-day?" he asked sternly.

"Nay, that I was na," sputtered Hodge. "A plague on Coventry!"

"Do na lie to me—thou wert there wi' my son Nicholas."

"I was na," snarled Hodge, angered by the accusation. "Nick Attwood threshed me in the Warrick road; an' I be no dawg to follow at the heels o' folks as threshes me."

"Where be he, then?" demanded Attwood, with a sudden sinking at heart in spite of his wrath.

"How should I know? A went away wi' a play-acting fellow in a plum-colored cloak; and play-acting fellow said a loved him like a's own, and patted a's back, and flung me hard names, like stones at a lost dawg. Now le' me go, Muster Attwood—cross my heart, 't is all I know!"

"Is 't Nicholas ye seek, Master Attwood?" asked Tom Carpenter, turning from his fleurs-de-lis. "Why, sir, he 's gone got famous, sir. I was in Coventry mysel' May-day; and—why, sir, Nick was all the talk! He sang there at



"'ONE WERE THY NICK, MUSTER ATTWOOD,' SAID HE."

the Blue Boar inn-yard with the Lord High Admiral's players, and took a part in the play; and, sir, ye 'd scarce believe me, but the people went just daft to hear him sing, sir."

Simon Attwood heard no more. He walked

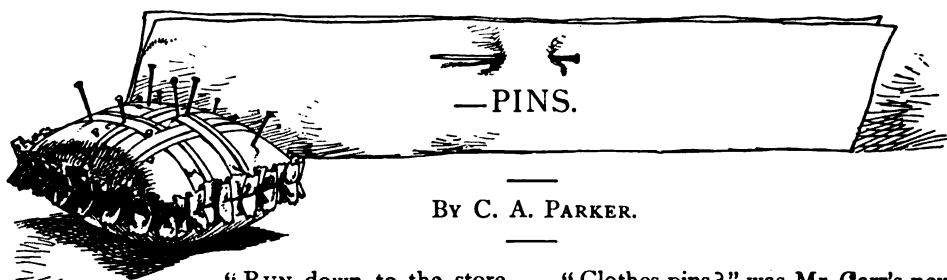
down High street in a daze. With hard men bitter blows strike doubly deep. He stopped before the guildhall school. The clock struck five; each iron clang seemed beating upon his heart. He raised his hand as if to shut the clangor out, and then his face grew stern and hard. "He hath gone his own wilful way," said he bitterly. "Let him follow it to the end."

Mistress Attwood came to meet him, running in the garden-path. "Nicholas?" was all that she could say. "Never speak to me of him

again," he said, and passed her by into the house. "He hath gone away with a pack of stage-playing rascals and vagabonds, whither no man knoweth."

Taking the heavy Bible down from the shelf, he lit a rushlight at the fire, although it was still broad daylight, and sat there with the great book open in his lap until the sun went down and the chill night wind crept in along the floor, yet he could not read a single word and never turned a page.

(To be continued.)



"Run down to the store, Susie dear, and get me two dozen clothes-pins, please," said Mrs. Wynn, one morning. "Go just as quickly as you can. I am in a great hurry."

Susie put down her doll, and rose rather unwillingly.

"Oh, dear!" she said to herself. "I wish I did n't have to go! It's so far, and Dorothea needs her new dress this very afternoon!"

But just then she caught sight of Lou Arnold going by. Lou lived near the store.

Susie seized her hat, and rushed out of the door.

"Lou, w-a-i-t!" she screamed; and in a few moments the two little girls were hurrying along together, chattering like a pair of magpies.

The way did n't seem at all long; but when Susie had bidden Lou good-by and stepped into the store, and Mr. Carr inquired what she wanted, she did n't know.

"It was some sort of pins," she said; "but I don't think it was just the common kind. They had a first name, I'm sure."

"Hair-pins?" suggested Mr. Carr.

"Oh, yes; I guess it was. No; I don't b'lieve it was hair-pins, either."

"Clothes-pins?" was Mr. Carr's next inquiry.

"Let me see. Maybe that was what mama said. I don't quite think it was, though."

"Can't you remember whether she said a box, or a paper, or so many dozen?" he asked.

"No; I can't remember anything but just *pins*," she replied, mournfully.

"Well, then, I'm afraid you will have to go home and find out what is wanted, won't you?" said Mr. Carr.

"I s'pose so," sighed the little girl; "but mama is in a norful hurry. I think prob'ly she'll scold. She says I'm dre'ful careless."

Mr. Carr thought a minute. He and Susie were great friends, and he did n't wish her to be scolded — even if she was rather careless. He was sorry to have Mrs. Wynn annoyed by the delay, too; so, as Susie started dejectedly for the door, he called her back.

"Wait," he said; "we'll try to manage this affair."

He put some clothes-pins into a bag, then he took a paper of common pins, and one of safety-pins, two hat-pins, and a box of hair-pins, and wrapped them up.